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A SUCCESSFUL HIGH-SCHOOL LIBRARY¹

C. C. PARLIN

Principal of the High School, Wausau, Wis.

This fall we took the best room in the Wausau High School building and made it into a library. Our reason for doing so was the unsatisfactory results of keeping the books in the Assembly Hall. The new room is of ample size, lighted by six south windows, and ventilated by two flues leading from the fan-room. We had the walls tinted a sage-green, the light oak woodwork done over into golden oak, the electric fixtures replaced by Nernst lamps, and a cork carpet put on the floor. Our manual-training department constructed some book-stacks of golden oak to match the woodwork, arranging them in alcoves and having an eye to aesthetic effect as well as to utility; it is also making tables, and a librarian's desk to replace those now in use, in order that all the furnishings may be in harmony. The athletic association loaned its trophy cups to adorn the cases, the pupils collected funds to buy plants, and I gave a popular lecture and raised fifty dollars to purchase some suitable pictures.

In these pleasant quarters we housed our library and in charge of it placed a librarian. To keep the initial expense within moderate limits, we employed a young lady who had had only a little library training, but who planned to make library work her vocation, and whose services we were able to secure for twenty dollars per month by allowing her two periods a day to complete her work for graduation. Though she had not the training we should have liked, yet, having come up through our school, she had the advantage of being familiar with our library and our methods of using it.

The library is open on school days from 8:15 A. M. to 5 P. M., and on Saturdays from 9 A. M. to 12 M. A teacher is in charge the two periods which the librarian is off duty, and a senior student is in charge during the noon hour.

¹ See frontispiece.

In number of volumes the library is not especially remarkable, our annual appropriation being about two hundred dollars, but it is strong in United States history. Our magazines, for which we have an appropriation of thirty dollars, are also kept in the library room, but during school hours pupils are allowed to use the library for reference work only; that is, neither textbook work nor magazine-reading may be done in the library during school hours except by special permission.

The card catalogue of the library is complete as to author and title-cards. We are working on a set of subject analytic cards which will not only refer the student to a few books on the subject in hand, but will also furnish page-references to a considerable number of works; we plan to include, not only such subjects as are found in the A. L. A. list, but also the names of important persons and places. It is a large task, but by the co-operation of teachers and pupils we hope to accomplish at least a part of it.

A pupil desiring to go to the library hands the teacher from whose charge he is departing a slip stating his name, the exact time of leaving, and the subject on which he proposes to read, and upon reaching the library hands the librarian a duplicate slip. Upon leaving the library the pupil hands the librarian a similar slip, and gives the teacher to whom he returns a duplicate. The teachers return their slips to the librarian, who checks them over and reports discrepancies to the principal's office. The slips are furnished in printed form; the pupils buying at one cent a pad the white slips used in going to the library and the school furnishing gratis the red slips used in returning from the library.

In the library absolute order is maintained at all times, no pupil being allowed to speak to another pupil except by special permission of the librarian. These regulations, you may say, allow too little freedom. They are rigid and are strictly enforced, but we want no possible misunderstanding in the mind of anybody of the fact that the library is not a place to loaf and visit, but a place to *work*. That the strict regulations do not unduly discourage pupils from the use of the library may be inferred from the fact that a record taken for eight consecutive school

days showed that on the average 147 pupils read in the library daily.

Reference works alone compose the library, our other books having been given to the Wausau Public Library several years ago. So the books are for the most part read in the library room; but books may be drawn from the library at 4:45 P. M., to be returned not later than 8:30 A. M. next day. For an infraction of this rule a pupil is blacklisted and not allowed to draw books for two weeks.

Under these circumstances the condition of the books is unexceptionable. They can always be accounted for, and are no longer found with disheveled leaves and torn covers.

The conduct of the pupils too has improved; for the one serious source of disorder was removed when the reading-tables left the Assembly Hall. When the faculty met, as they are accustomed to do once in six weeks, to estimate the conduct of pupils for the encouragement of their parents, the teachers unanimously voted nearly everybody "excellent" which caused one of the teachers to exclaim: "Is the millennium at hand?" From the standpoint of the Assembly Hall alone, the better conditions for study, and the saving in wear and tear on the teachers' nerves, are worth all the library costs.

Teachers have a much more accurate measure of the library work done for them by their pupils. This may be made more clear by a concrete illustration. Johnny Jones, arriving at the library, hands the librarian a slip stating that he arrives January 7, 8:30 A. M., and proposes to read Greek history. Now the librarian has, in her catalogue case, a card headed "Johnny Jones—Greek history." On this card she records, "January 7, 8:30." Later Johnny hands in his leaving-slip, stating that he is leaving the library January 7, 9:10 A. M., and has read Greek history. The librarian then completes his record on the card so that it now reads, "January 7, 8:30—9:10, 40 minutes." Now, if the teacher of Greek history comes along at 10:30 A. M., he may see just how much time Johnny spent in the library preparing for his lesson today, and by a little computation the teacher can discover how much time Johnny has actually spent in the

library on Greek history for the past week or semester. Pupils who take books home are asked upon returning the books how much time was spent in reading them, and their estimates are recorded in a separate column headed "Home Readings," so that the teacher of Greek history may obtain a record both of the time Johnny Jones spent in the library and of the time he professed to have spent at home on books from the reference library.

If, at first, the library appeared to anyone as an experiment—possibly a fad—it has certainly proved conclusively that it is worth more than it costs, and funds for its continued maintenance and improvement will be cheerfully voted by the Board of Education.